

Simple activities for children and adolescents



Tips on how to help communities and families recover

Children and adolescents show a wide range of reactions to trauma. A young person's reaction following a disaster such as a bushfire will depend on factors such as their age, past experiences and other things that are going on in their lives. There are several things that parents and carers can do to help children and adolescents cope after a disaster, including participating in enjoyable activities together as a family.

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, children and adolescents may be without their usual games and activities. This tip sheet contains suggestions of activities that families can participate in with limited supplies, for example, when they are in temporary accommodation or evacuation centres.

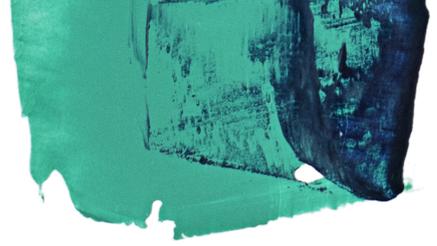
Activities with no supplies needed

- Tell stories.
- Tell exaggerated "Stories of the old days" to entertain.
- Put on mini plays or skits. Have children act out different characters.
- Play "Story Building." One person starts the story, and then the other(s) add(s) to it.
- Share secrets, most embarrassing moments, wishes, and/or dreams.
- Make up different dances or dance to known songs (e.g., the hokie pokie). Have a dance contest.
- Play "Name that Tune." One person hums a tune or says a line from a song and others try to guess the name of the song.
- Play "Hide and Seek." Designate an area with clear boundaries. Have everyone gather around a landmark that will be home base. Pick a person to be IT. Whoever IT is closes their eyes and counts to a designated number while the rest of the players hide. Once the countdown is done, IT says "Ready or not here I come" then goes to look for, and find, the hidden players. The first player found will be IT for the next round. Repeat.
- Play "Tag" or some variation. Examples include: Freeze Tag (when people are tagged they freeze into position. Others who have not been tagged can unfreeze them by touching the frozen person or crawling through their legs). TV Tag (a player who is tagged by the person IT can be unfrozen by answering or naming something in a category that IT has established. Example - IT says "cartoons." When a player is tagged they can say the name of a cartoon to become unfrozen). Duck, Duck, Goose (players sit in a circle. IT walks around gently tapping everyone on the head saying "duck." The person who is IT will choose a different player to be IT by touching their head as they pass, saying "goose." This player will get up and try to tag them before they get to the empty spot in the circle).



Activities with no supplies needed (continued)

- Play "Simon Says." One player is designated Simon and the other players do whatever Simon says as long as he says the phrase "Simon says" before the command. If Simon does not say "Simon says" before the command, the players don't move. Any player who acts without hearing "Simon says" is out of the game. The winner is the last player left.
- Play "Sound Search." Everyone sits still and identifies as many different sounds as possible.
- Play "Red Rover." Separate everyone into two equal teams. Have each team stand in a straight line, holding hands. The two teams should be facing each other, about ten metres apart. Team A decides who to "call over" from Team B and they chant, "Red Rover, Red Rover, we call (name) over!" The player from Team B who was called must run to Team A and try to break through the arms of the other team. If the person breaks through the line, they add to that team's chain. Continue playing until one team only has two people.
- Play "Wheelbarrow Races." Partner up and have teams of two line up at a starting line. One partner faces the finish line and places his/her hands on the ground and feet in their partner's hands. At a signal to start, the teams walk to the finish line this way. The first team to cross the finish line wins.
- Play "Marco Polo" on land. One player is IT and is blindfolded and spun around a couple of times. IT closes his/her eyes and counts to 20 to allow other players time to move away and hide. The players stop where they are when IT reaches 20, and stay in those positions until the end of the game. IT yells out "Marco" and the players have to respond with "Polo." IT uses these responses to find the other players. As the other players are tagged, they are eliminated from the game. The winner is the last person standing who has not been tagged.
- Play "Follow the Leader." Players line up and walk behind the leader, copying whatever the leader does.
- Play "Charades." One person (or team) acts out a movie, book, or TV show using only body language while others try to guess what they are acting out.
- Play "Encore." Assign common words to two teams who take turns trying to think of a song that contains each word. Each team must be able to sing at least eight words of the song in order for the turn to count.
- Play "20 Questions." One person thinks of a noun, cartoon character, singer, movie, book, television show, or sports star. Have the players take turns asking a question to guess what IT is thinking. IT answers with yes, no, sometimes, usually, or rarely. When the 20 questions are up, the players get a final guess. If no one answers correctly, the answer is given.
- Play "Rock, Paper, Scissors." Two people move their fists up and down three times while saying together "rock, paper, scissors." On the fourth downward motion each person chooses a gesture:* Rock: a closed fist* Paper: a flat, open hand* Scissors: index and middle finger extended out to look like scissors* Winning: Rock smashes scissors, scissors cut paper, paper covers rock.
- Exercise. Take a walk, do a dance, do yoga, stretch.
- Go outside at night and point out different constellations in the night sky

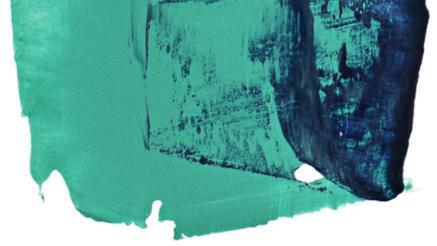


Activities to do in the car

- Tell stories.
- Play "Story Building". One person starts the story and then the other(s) add(s) to it during their turn.
- Share secrets, most embarrassing moments, wishes, and/or dreams.
- Play "Name that Tune." One person hums a tune or says a line from a song and others try to guess the name of the song.
- Play the "Alphabet Game." Try to find all of the letters of the alphabet (in order) on roads signs, billboards, etc. Letters can come from any sign as long as it is outside of the car. Letters must be the first letter of a word. The first person to call out a letter on a sign gets credit for that letter, and the first person to get through the alphabet to Z wins.
- Play the "Number Plate Game." Have a list or map of all the states and territories and mark off or write down the states of number plates that you see. The first person to see and call out the name of a state on a number plate gets to put that state on his or her list, or everyone can work together to make the list of states and territories.
- Play "Count the . . ." Take turns picking an object to count (cows, motorbikes, trucks). First person to see the object gets to count it. The person who counts the most objects in a certain time wins, or everyone can work together to count an object.
- Play "Encore." Assign common words to two teams which take turns trying to think of a song that contains each word. Each team must be able to sing at least eight words of the song in order for the entry to count.
- Play "20 Questions." One person thinks of a noun, cartoon character, singer, movie, book, television show, or sports star. Have the players take turns asking a question to guess what IT is thinking. IT answers with yes, no, sometimes, usually, or rarely. When the 20 questions are up, the players get a final guess. If no one answers correctly, the answer is given.

Activities that require limited supplies for daytime or lighted areas

- Crumple up a piece of paper and play a ball game (e.g., basketball, baseball, blowing the ball across a table into a goal).
- Play "Marbles." If no marbles are available use rocks or pebbles. Draw a circle and see who can knock the marbles out of the circle using their marbles.
- Play "Hangman." Choose one person to be the "host" who chooses a secret word. Draw a short blank line for each letter in the word. Have players start guessing letters to fill in the blanks. Draw part of the "hangman" for each wrong guess. Whoever guesses the word before the entire hangman is drawn gets to pick the next word.
- Make paper aeroplanes, origami, hats, paper doll chains, or paper boats.
- Trace a child's hand or draw a random shape, and see what animals you can make out of it.
- Write letters to friends or family.

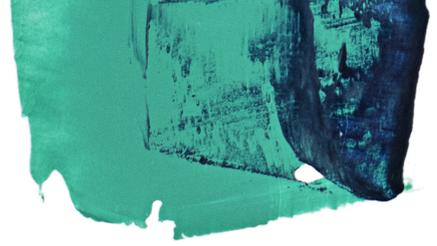


Activities that require limited supplies for daytime or lighted areas

- Play "Noughts and Crosses." Make a three-by-three grid on a piece of paper. One person is the "X" and the other is the "O." The player who first succeeds in placing three of their symbols in a row, wins.
- Play "Hidden Words." Have everyone agree on a key word, which is at least seven letters long. Then have players try to find as many smaller words inside the key word by rearranging the letters. For example, if kitchen is your key word, hidden words inside of that would be itch, it, kit, etch, etc.
- Play "Find a Word." Make a grid of random letters interspersed with horizontal, vertical, and diagonal words, and have the child circle the words when they find them.
- Play "Five Questions." Write down five questions such as:
 1. What is your favourite colour?
 2. What is (or was) your favourite subject in school?
 3. What is your favourite song?
 4. What is your favourite food?
 5. What is your favourite book?

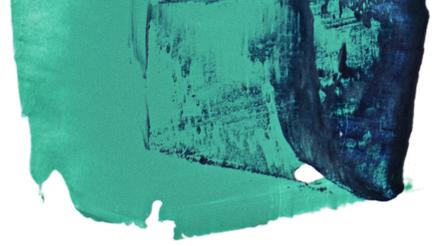
Each person has to answer the questions. Once the first set of questions have been answered, let another player come up with the next set of questions.

- Play "House of Cards/Blocks/Coins." Using a deck of cards, blocks or coins, choose a flat surface and have each person build a house. Whichever house stands the longest wins.
- Play "Tug of War." Find a level, grassy area and make a centre line on the ground. Get a long rope and mark its centre; put the rope's centre on the centre line you created on the grass. Form two teams, one on each side of the centre line. Each team will hold their side of the rope. At a start signal, each team tugs their hardest to try to pull the other team over the centre line.
- If a ball is available, play catch, basketball, soccer, or another ball game.
- Have a treasure hunt where you write down clues on slips of paper that lead children to a "treasure."
- Have a scavenger hunt where you make a list of items and have children compete to collect the most items.
- Have an impromptu camp-out using sheets or blankets to make tents over furniture.
- Play "Guess the Object." Select an object and hand it to a child under a cloth while their eyes are closed or they are blindfolded. They feel the object to determine what they are holding. When they guess correctly, offer another object to guess. If they have difficulty, give clues or allow them to ask questions about what they feel.
- Play "Guess the Person." Give one word to describe a family member or friend. Ask the child to guess who it is. If the child guesses incorrectly, give another word that describes that person and then allow for another guess. Continue this process until the child guesses correctly.
- Play battery-powered games.
- Play card games, board games, or dominoes.
- Perform simple magic tricks.
- Play musical instruments or create musical instruments.



Activities that require limited supplies for nighttime or dark areas

- Play "Shadow Puppets." Create shadow puppets using a torch and your hands.
- Play "Shadow Drawing." Tape large sheets of paper on the wall. Have your child stand in front of the paper. Using a torch, cast a shadow on the paper. You or other children can trace the child's shadow on the paper. Then have your children colour or draw in the features.
- Play "Museum After Dark." The "museum guide" has a torch. The rest of the players spread out and strike interesting poses as if they are a piece of art. The museum guide walks around and examines each piece of art using funny words to describe what they see. If the museum guide can make the "Art" laugh or move, that person becomes the new guide.
- Play "Sleeping Pirate." The "pirate" has the torch and sits at one end of the playing area with treasure (any objects the group chooses). The other players line up in the corner of the other end of the room. Each player tries to sneak up and take the treasure from the pirate without being heard. If the pirate hears a sound, they shine the torch in that direction. If the light tags a player, they must go back to the starting line. The first player to get one of the treasures becomes the new pirate.
- Play "Torch Scavenger Hunt." Call out different objects in a dark room or other clues for the players to find. The first person to shine their light on that object then gets to pick the next object.



Supplies for your family fun kit

Circle the items you put in your kit

Torch with extra batteries

Pens, pencils, crayons, textas, chalk

Paper

Colouring books

Deck of cards

Other card games (e.g., Uno, Go Fish)

Dominoes

Marbles

Small board games

Balls (e.g., tennis)

Skipping rope

Puzzle(s)

Books

Extra batteries or chargers for games

Towels

Sheets

Favourite blanket

Stuffed toy

Add other items that your children would like to include in the kit

Adapted with permission from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network

If anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties or irritability persist for more than two weeks after your return home, you should talk to your GP. For immediate assistance and/or 24-hour counselling and referrals, see details on the right.

Useful services and resources

Lifeline - for immediate assistance
13 11 14

Australian Psychological Society - find a psychologist
1800 333 497

Beyond Blue
1300 224 636